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PUBLIC RELATIONS

June 1988

WHAT'S HOT

And how it got that way

Salary Survey Results

Forecast for Better Brainstorms

How to Delegate

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PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

June 1988 Vol. 44 No. 6

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Behind many a trend, there's a public relations professional. Here's the inside scoop on what's fueled six of our latest consuming passions.

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Cover Design: *Blake Taylor*

INSIDE TRACK

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

What generates the heat that makes a trend a trend? Which comes first, the public reaction or the public relations, the publicity or the publicist? Clearly, no rule holds. But in searching out this year's hot people, places, and things, it was axiomatic that somewhere in the chain of events that puts the chicken—or egg, whichever came first—in every pot, there was a public relations professional moving things along.

Of course, as in any journalistic endeavor, the attempt to determine place of origin sometimes fails. Take denim, for example. Our trendwatchers told us that denim had made yet another comeback. Calls to department stores elicited the history of denim trends but no sense that public relations was in the trend-making mix. Calls to designers and clothing manufacturers yielded either no response or the answer that public relations for denim was either reactive or geared to traditional denim wearers. And the word from the cotton mills—which are always, production schedule-wise, a bit out of synch with trendlines—was that denim had, in fact, been over-produced and that layoffs were the order of the day. That, of course, brings up another issue for public relations professionals—but not the one we were looking for.

Then there's Cher. The search for this year's hottest celebrity returned time and again to the hottest celebrity of a generation, the face that's launched a thousand magazine covers. This year seemed to have been Cher's banner year. But though we were *Moonstruck*, the question of whether public relations played a role had to remain *Suspect*—her publicist would not return our numerous calls, finally responding through her secretary that she wasn't interested in discussing public relations strategies.

The other difficulty in trend tracking is keeping current while maintaining monthly magazine lead time. As our article was at the typesetter, Don Regan's book hit the bookstores, and astrology was suddenly all the rage. It seemed only logical that we append this trend to our list. So we checked in with a number of astrologers to see if they could give us some pointers to pass on in this column about upcoming dates—when it would be best, or worst, to pitch a story, make a presentation to a client, get the ear of a CEO, plan an event, train a spokesperson, etc., etc. While one astrologer conceded that at certain times "the aspects would be more favorable to certain types of tasks," most said they did not "deal in lucky days."

Their horror at our suggestion made us wonder whether the increased publicity—much of it as humorous, if not cynical, as ours would have been—had been perceived by believers as negative. Had there been an attempt by the defenders of astrology at damage control, if not crisis management. Apparently, it wasn't necessary.

"It's been like being on a winning ball team," reports Robert W. Cooper, executive secretary of the Tempe, Arizona-based American Federation of Astrologers (AFA). Calls have been running "three-to-one favorable to astrology." Cooper's group—which he describes as the "lowest key" type of organization—has been, in relative terms, deluged with inquiries.

In reaction to calls, AFA sends out information packets. But the literature included tells little about astrology itself—there's plenty written about that already, Cooper says. It talks instead about AFA and its upcoming conference, on Financial Astrology, in Las Vegas next month.

—Michael Winkleman
Editor

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(212) 995-2230

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is an individual membership professional society of 14,265 public relations practitioners. Its major services to members include programs of Professional Development and Accreditation, an Information Center, publications, tracking of issues of national concern, and promotion of ethical practice through adherence to PRSA's "Code of Professional Standards." PRSA's mission is "To serve the public need for understanding and cooperation among its diverse interests by fostering high professional and ethical standards for all those practicing public relations."

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BRIEFINGS

steady increase in the number of callers, positive letters, and favorable on-the-air comments as reasons for an increase in OPEN/net programming in February of this year—it's now on twice a week. In addition, "State to State," an OPEN/net program that features government officials from several states discussing how their locales are dealing with issues such as toxic waste disposal, is now being carried nationally by the Learning Channel, a private, national cable TV network specializing in educational and public affairs programming. The state of North Carolina is credited at the beginning and end of each broadcast.

Because of this national exposure, as well as a number of prestigious awards, OPEN/net is becoming a model for public affairs cable networks across the country. According to Wing, state government officials and telecommunications executives from New Jersey, California, and Washington, among others, have called and met with APT officials.

Officials who have not considered the benefits of this type of network are being exhorted to do so. Pat Murphy, publisher of the *Arizona Republic*, in a March 20, 1988, column called on Arizona's legislators and agency officials to follow OPEN/net's example by "creating a broadcast town hall which all Arizonans could 'attend' in their living rooms, and in which they could participate by telephoning government officials who submit themselves to taxpayer questions."

Ben Kittner, APR

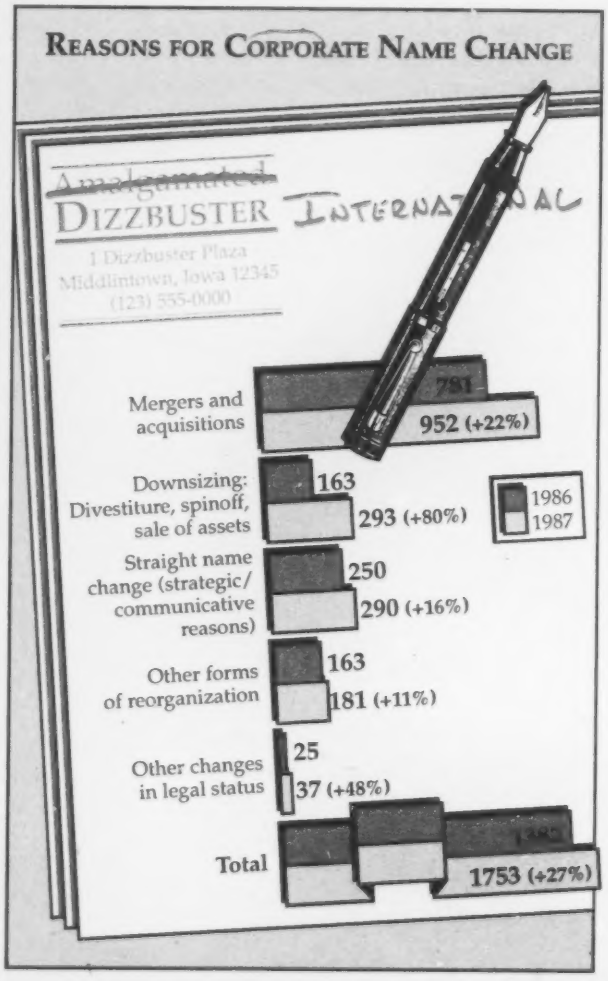
Ben Kittner, APR, is director of development and planning for the North Carolina Agency for Public Telecommunications in Raleigh.

Name Changes—And the Beat Goes On

IT seems that nothing—not even a stock market crash—can stop or impede Corporate America's propensity to change its names. A record high of 1,753 corporations changed their names in 1987, a 27 percent increase from 1,382 in 1986, according to a study done by identity consultants Anspach Grossman Portugal. And name changes during the first quarter of 1988, according to Ken Love, a principal in the firm, are keeping pace with 1987 numbers. He believes that the total amount of name changes in 1988 will probably be about the same or slightly larger than last year.

More than half (54 percent) of corporate name changes in 1987, the survey found, came about because of mergers or acquisitions; 17 percent are due to downsizings; and 10 percent because of other forms of reorganization. The biggest jump since 1986 was in the percentage of name changes attributed to downsizing (divestitures, spin-offs, leveraged buyouts, and sales of assets), according to the survey. Downsizing-related name changes were up 80 percent in 1987 over the name changes associated with downsizings in 1986. According to Joel Portugal, another principal in the firm, "At 17 percent of the total, downsizing is an increasingly significant part of the name-change story. It represents growth of the corporate universe, which goes hand-in-hand with more tightly focused, targeted corporate strategies . . . and identities."

The number of name changes in 1988 is keeping pace with 1987 figures, says Love.



Although only 17 percent of name changes were made for "strategic, communicative reasons," this is a 16 percent increase in this type of name change.

Another major reason there have been so many name changes, according to the survey, is the consolidation of the banking industry. FDIC/FSLIC-assisted mergers of banks and thrift institutions accounted for 33 percent of the corporate name changes in the acquisition/merger category.

Other industry groups with high numbers of name changes in 1987 include healthcare and transportation—both had a 59 percent increase over name changes in their fields in 1986. The communications industry also had a strong increase, 42 percent, which the survey attributed to an ongoing consolidation of cable TV companies.

Martha Guevara

Martha Guevara is an editorial intern at PRJ.

Editor's note: The survey from which the following results were drawn was conducted as an insert poll in the March 1988 issue of *PRJ*. Respondents were self-selected readers who chose to fill in the survey and mail it back. The results are not necessarily representative of the universe of public relations professionals but offer insights into trends in the field and, in many cases, correlate well with data drawn from other studies.

SALARY SURVEY

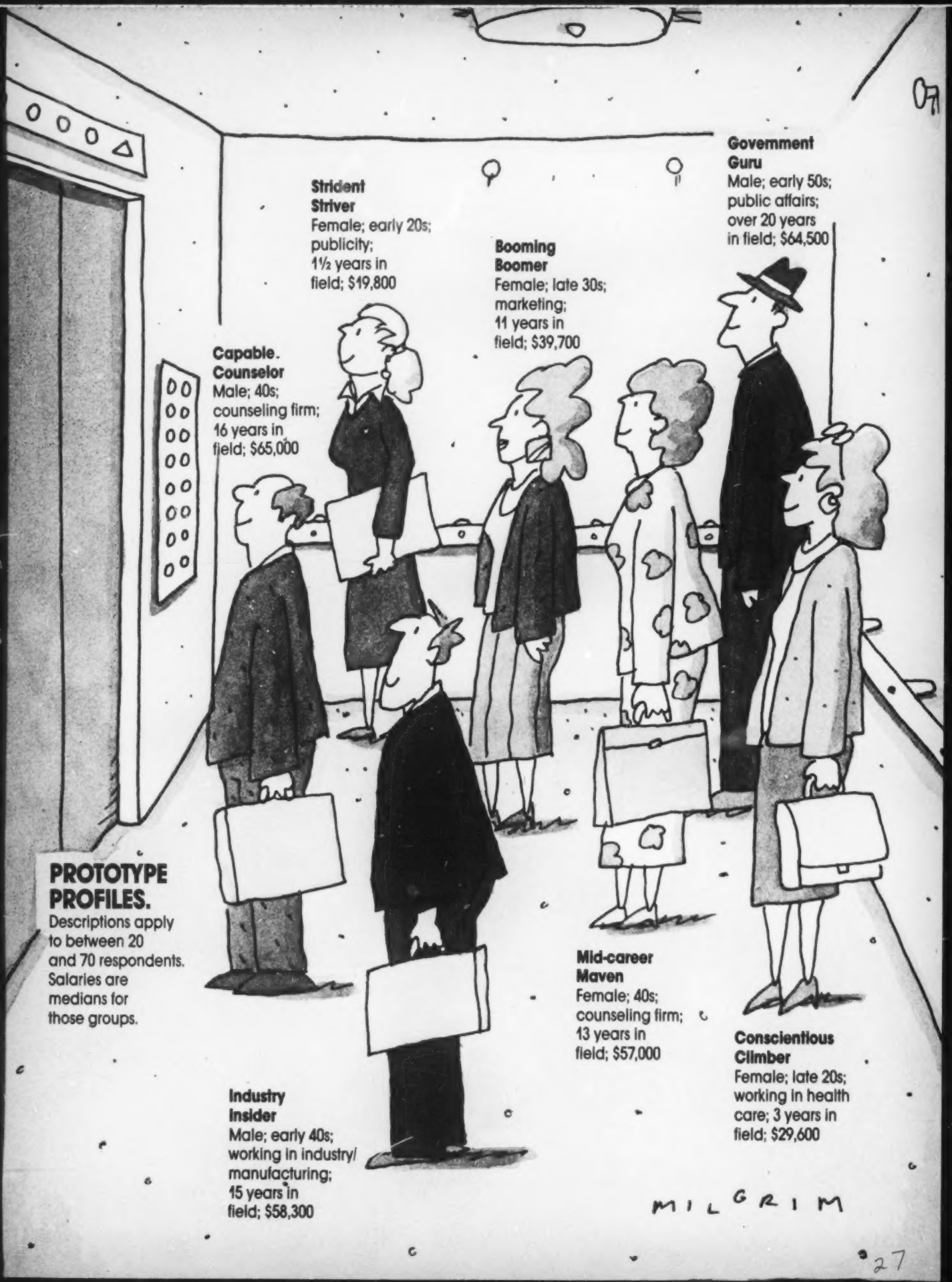
$ALARYWISE, experience counts. That seems to be the watchword of *PRJ*'s third annual salary survey. Though age, title, area of specialization, size of firm or department, type of company, geographic location, and gender each play a role in determining base salaries, what seems to make the critical difference for our respondents in determining salary level is how long they've been working in this field.

Though this seems to imply that there is no fast track, that you've got to do your time to reap financial rewards, the survey results do show that careful career planning—paying attention to which specialties, industries, types and sizes of firms, and regions of the country pay the best—can point you to, if not the road of riches, then at least the path to maximum earnings.

In general, according to the 1,235 practitioners who responded to the *PRJ* survey, the highest-paying specialty areas in public relations are: investor relations (median salary is $51,200; 59 percent of IR practitioner

Illustration by David Milgrim

By Victor Russell


Strident Striver
Female; early 20s; publicity; 1½ years in field; $19,800
Booming Boomer
Female; late 30s; marketing; 11 years in field; $39,700
Government Guru
Male; early 50s; public affairs; over 20 years in field; $64,500
Capable Counselor
Male; 40s; counseling firm; 16 years in field; $65,000
PROTOTYPE PROFILES.
Descriptions apply to between 20 and 70 respondents. Salaries are medians for those groups.
Mid-career Maven
Female; 40s; counseling firm; 13 years in field; $57,000
Conscientious Climber
Female; late 20s; working in health care; 3 years in field; $29,600
Industry Insider
Male; early 40s; working in industry/ manufacturing; 15 years in field; $58,300
MILGRIM

respondents earn over $45,000); issues management ($48,900; 57 percent earn over $45,000); public affairs ($43,900; 47 percent earn over $45,000); and corporate communications ($43,300; 47 percent earn over $45,000). Considerably lower paying are special events ($38,200; 63 percent earn under $45,000); community relations ($38,200; 63 percent earn under $45,000), and publicity ($37,100; 65 percent earn under $45,000). (For more details, see the chart on page 30.)

Corporate public relations remains higher paying than counseling, and both are considerably better paying than either governmental institutions or associations. Sixty-seven percent of responding practitioners at industrial and manufacturing firms earn more than $45,000, as do 55 percent of practitioners at utility companies.

Respondents at counseling firms report that 50 percent earn more than $45,000. In contrast, 25 percent of respondents at associations and foundations, 21 percent at health care institutions, 34 percent in government, and 31 percent in education earn more than $45,000.

An additional determi appears to be the size o respondent's firm or department (as measured by the number of public relations professionals on staff). The larger the firm or department, the higher the pay. Sixty-four percent of respondents in firms or departments with 25 or more professionals earn over $45,000, compared with 57 percent in firms or departments with 10 to 24 professionals, 47 percent in firms or departments with 5 to 9, and 30 percent in firms or departments with 1 to 4.

Title is, of course, a determinant of salary (see the charts on page 29, but note that titles have been combined in order to provide more reliable sample sizes)—the more senior the title, the higher the salary. However, titles can be misleading. The median salary level for vice presidents in counseling firms, for example, is $51,400. But this is 27 percent, or $18,000, less than the median salary of $69,500 earned by vice presidents in other organizations. It is not clear whether this is indicative of real differences in pay scales for senior personnel in different types of companies or if it is simply a manifestation of "title inflation" in counseling firms.

Geography, too, seems to hold some weight. Forty-nine percent of respondents in the western states earned over $45,000, as did 44 percent of respondents in the Northeast and 39 percent of respondents in the Southwest. However, 50 percent of respondents in the Mid-

BALANCE SHEET

Other data emerging from the *PRJ* Salary Survey reveal that among respondents:

- 60 percent did not receive a bonus last year.
- 51 percent did not know their firm's or department's annual billings or budget.
- 75 percent work in firms or departments with fewer than 10 practitioners.
- 26 percent are accredited.

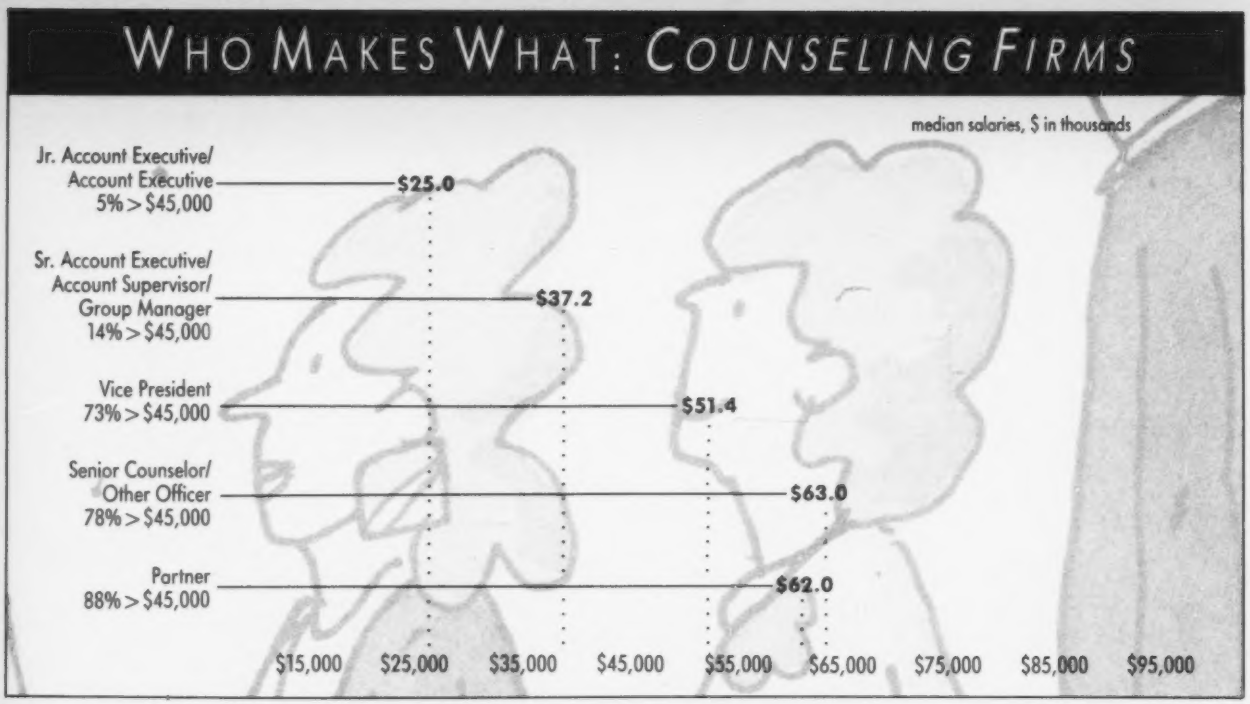
According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the gender gap may be more significant in public relations than in other fields. Its surveys show that:

- Female public relations specialists earn 58 percent of what their male counterparts earn.
- Female managers in public relations, marketing, and advertising earn 63 percent of what their male counterparts earn.
- Female physicians earn 79 percent of what male physicians earn.
- Female lawyers earn 76 percent of what male lawyers earn.
- Female reporters and editors earn 74 percent of what their male counterparts earn.
- Female accountants earn 70 percent of what male accountants earn.

WHO'S WHO, WHAT, & WHERE

Demographics of Respondents

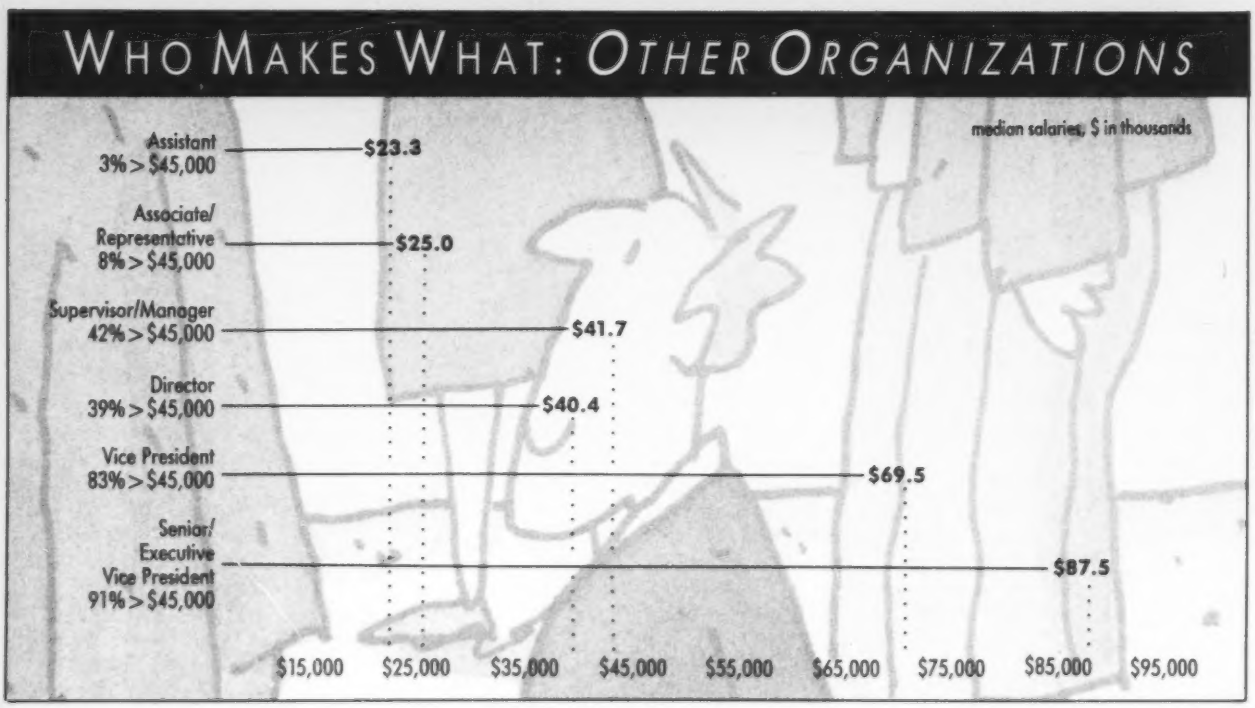
	%
Gender	
Male	47
Female	51
No answer	2
Age	
under 25	8
25–34	36
35–44	29
45–54	16
55+	11
Years in Field	
less than 1	3
1–4	23
5–9	26
10–14	18
15–19	12
20+	17
Region	
Northeast	25
South	20
Southwest	8
Northwest	27
West	14
Canada	2
Activity of Organization	
Counseling Firm	17
Industrial, Manufacturing	11
Health Care	9
Financial, Insurance	9
Association, Foundation	8
Government	7
Utility	6
Education	6
Media	3
Religious, Charitable	3
Other	22
Specialty	
(Respondents could check as many as applied)	
Media Relations	80
Publicity	72
Special Events	71
Community Relations	59
Corporate Communications	58
Marketing	54
Public Affairs	47
Employee Relations	42
Advertising	41
Issues Management	37
Investor Relations	14

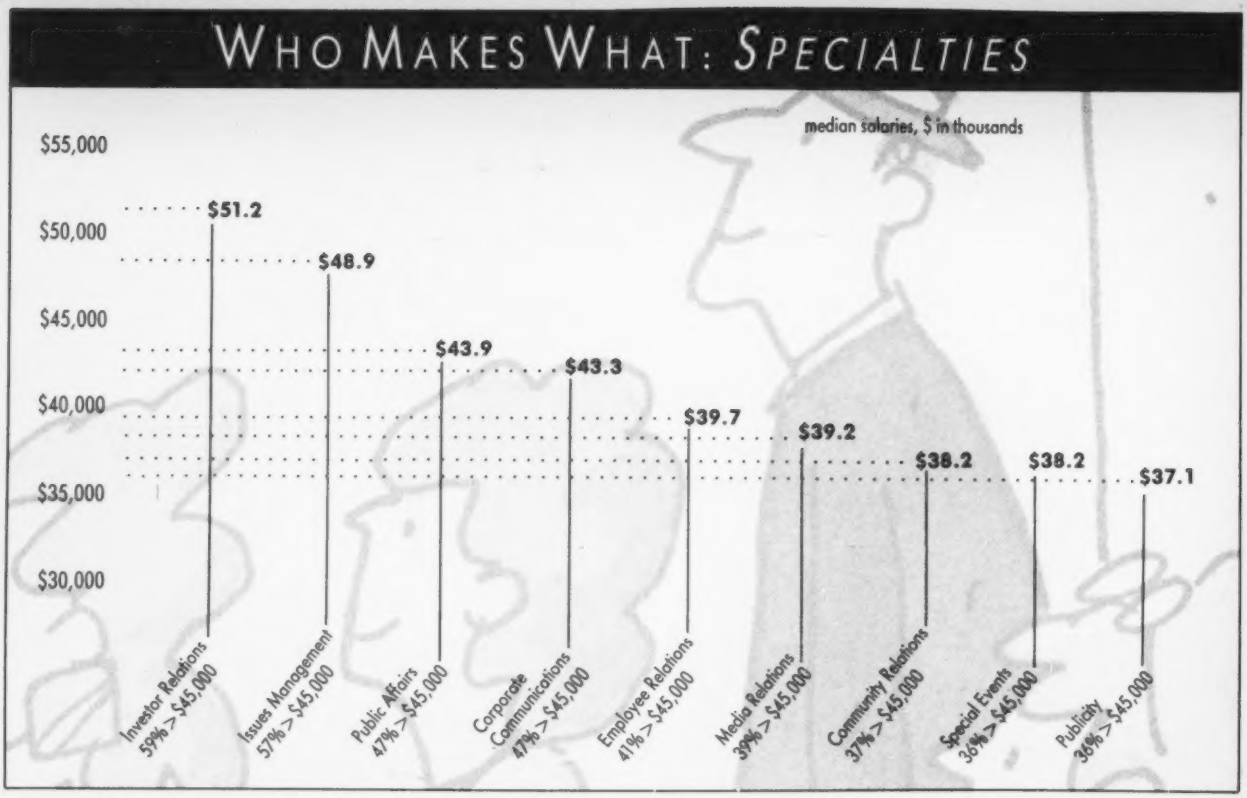

WHO MAKES WHAT: COUNSELING FIRMS
median salaries, $ in thousands
Jr. Account Executive/ Account Executive 5% > $45,000
$25.0
Sr. Account Executive/ Account Supervisor/ Group Manager 14% > $45,000
$37.2
Vice President 73% > $45,000
$51.4
Senior Counselor/ Other Officer 78% > $45,000
$63.0
Partner 88% > $45,000
$62.0
$15,000 $25,000 $35,000 $45,000 $55,000 $65,000 $75,000 $85,000 $95,000

west reported salaries under $35,000, as did 48 percent of respondents in the South.

But underlying all of this seems to be experience. While 52 percent of practitioners with less than 5 years' experience earn between $15,000 and $24,999, and another 29 percent between $25,000 and $34,999, 39 percent of practitioners with 5 to 9 years' experience earn between $25,000 and $34,999 and 27 percent earn between $35,000 and $44,999. And while 22 percent of practitioners with 5 to 9 years' experience earn over $45,000, 46 percent of practitioners with 10 to 14 years of experience earn over $45,000, as do 79 percent of those with 15 to 19 years of experience and 83 percent of those in the field for over 20 years. In general, it appears that for every year of experience, salaries seem to increase by about $2,000.

Median salaries for public relations professionals have increased by an average of 5.7 percent since 1987's survey (the vast difference in the number of respondents—328 in 1987 and 1,235 in 1988—should, however, be considered in evaluating this increase), bringing the median





salary this year to $39,100. Respondents report a median salary increase of 7 percent over last year.

Still clearly evident is a significant gap between median male and female salaries—$50,300 compared to $32,900, respectively. However, as in previous years, much of this appears to be attributable to a number of other variables. According to an analysis of the respondents, women are generally younger (median age 32, with 74 percent under 40), have been in the field for fewer years (median number of years is 5.9, with only 13 percent in for more than 15 years), work in smaller departments or firms (64 percent are in firms or departments with fewer than five professionals), have more junior titles (40 percent are in entry- or junior-level positions), and tend to work in such lower-paying arenas as health care institutions (13 percent of women compared to 6 percent of men), specializing in such lower-paying areas as community relations (63 percent of women compared to 55 percent of men), special events (77 percent of women compared to 66 percent of men), and publicity (77 percent of women compared to 69 percent of men).

In contrast, male respondents are generally older (median age is 41, with 57 percent over age 40), have been in the field for a greater number of years (median number is 12.6, with 45 percent in the field for more than 15 years), work in larger departments or firms (57 percent report fewer than 5 professionals), have more senior titles (only 13 percent are in entry- or junior-level positions), and tend to be found in such higher-paying specialities as investor relations (18 percent of men compared to 9 percent of women), issues management (42 percent of men compared to 32 percent of women), and corporate communications (63 percent of men compared to 53 percent of women). Men are also more likely to be found in such higher-paying arenas as industry and manufacturing (15 percent of men; 7 percent of women).

Nonetheless, a regression analysis, stripping away all variables besides gender, indicates that regardless of all the factors that both influence and seem to explain the considerable differences between male and female salaries, a significant gender gap does continue to exist.

How do salaries of public relations professionals compare to those of professionals in other fields? Sixty-five percent of respondents think they are lower. That perception, in reality, appears to be both true and false.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, editors and reporters have a median salary of $23,452, 40 percent lower than the median salary *PRJ*'s survey of practitioners found, and 38.3 percent lower than the salary BLS reports for marketing, advertising, and public relations managers ($38,012). BLS reports median salaries of $36,296 for lawyers and $42,328 for doctors.

A recent *Adweek* poll shows median salaries for corporate marketing department employees of $54,800 and for advertising agency employees of $60,700, compared to $37,800 for the public relations professionals who answered *Adweek*'s survey. Broken down to title level, *Adweek* found that advertising account managers earn a median salary of $41,900. *PRJ* survey respondents who work in public relations firms and carry either senior account executive, account supervisor, or group manager as their title report a median salary of $37,200. And *Adweek*'s survey reported median salaries of $75,000, $69,700, and $59,400 respectively for vice presidents in the creative, account management, and media departments, while *PRJ* reports salaries of $69,500 and $51,400 respectively for vice presidents in corporate and counseling organizations. ■

Victor Russell is senior vice president of Research & Forecasts in New York City, which tabulated the data for PRJ.